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Letter dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the attached document for circulation as a document of the Security Council (see annexes I, II and III).*

I would be very grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Francis K. **Butagira**
Permanent Representative

* The annexes are being circulated in the language of submission only.

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Annexes to the letter dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Annex I

Draft concept paper on the proposed regional mechanism to deal with the Lords Resistance Army as a threat to regional peace and security in Uganda, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. INTRODUCTION

At the Ministerial Meeting on Northern Uganda, the LRA and its Regional Implications in Geneva, 20th March 2006, it was agreed that dealing with LRA as a regional threat would remove the fear among IDPs and allow for a faster return and resettlement as well as post-conflict reconstruction in Northern Uganda. It was also decided to have a meeting of a smaller group including competent representatives to focus on the issues of the LRA as a regional peace and security in Kampala on 30th March 2006.

Furthermore, the UNSC resolution 1653 (2006) in the context of the debate on the Great Lakes region and the killing of LRA of the 8 Guatemalan peacekeepers in the DRC in January 2006, focused on the threat by the foreign negative forces including ADF, NALU, PRA and LRA as a threat to regional peace and security in Uganda and the DRC. The Council:

1) Expressed deep concern at the devastating impact of foreign negative forces including ADF and LRA, which have caused death, abductions and displacement of innocent civilians thus causing humanitarian crises and threatening regional peace and security in the Great Lakes Region.

2) Strongly condemned the activities of ADF, LRA, FNL and FDLR and demanded that such groups lay down their arms and engage in voluntary repatriation without an delay or preconditions for the DRRR.

3) Stressed the need for states in the region, within their respective territories to disarm, demobilize and cooperate with repatriation or resettlement of the negative forces and called on MONUC and UNMIS to take robust action within their mandates.

The UNSC resolution 1663 (2006) in operatives 7 and 8 also gives mandate on LRA and requests the UN secretary General to report on LRA.

2. EVOLUTION OF THE LRA REBELLION

The Lords Resistance Army (LRA) emerged from remnants of the defeated forces i.e:

- UNLA (1979-1986).
- UPDM/A (1986-1987).
- Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena (1986).

LRA was proclaimed in October 1987 by Joseph Kony Laor under the banner of "Holy Spirit Movement II" with the stated objective of "purifying" Acholi and liberating the "God's Kingdom" and ruling Uganda under the 10 commandments of the bible.

Subsequently, it was renamed as follows:

- The United Holy Salvation Front (1st December 1988).
- The Uganda Christian Democratic Army (7th July 1990).
- The Lord Resistance Army (30th May 1993).

Due to the Uganda Government military (UPDF) counter-insurgency operations in Northern Uganda, the LRA strength

declined. However, in February 1994, LRA remnants crossed into Sudan where they were re-organized retrained and re-equipped by Sudan Government. Sudan guaranteed LRA a rear base, logistical, military support.

Since then, LRA consistently attacked Uganda from its bases in Southern Sudan and adopted terrorism as weapon, targeting mainly civilians. The purpose was to intimidate the population from exposing the LRA presence (to UPDF) as well as securing supplies, recruits, carriers and wives for the LRA senior soldiers.

3. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO HOLD DIALOGUE WITH JOSEPH KONY'S LRA

Since 1988 to date, the Government of Uganda has maintained an open channel for dialogue with LRA rebels:

- **1993-1994:** The then Minister for Northern Region, Hon. Betty Bigombe brokered peace talks at Pagik-Gulu with the LRA rebels. The talks broke down in January 1994, after Kony requested for more time before signing a final agreement. Kony instead used the requested time to mobilise his forces for further war.

- **25-Nov-1993**, the first face to face talks with between LRA and Bigombe at Pagik in Gulu district.

- 11-Jan-1994, the North Minister Betty Bigombe holds peace talks with Joseph Kony the leader of LRA at Pagik in Gulu district.

- **In May -1997**, LRM officials meet members of the Rome-based St Egidio on ending war and handing over Aboke girls.

- **18-Oct 1997,** States Minister for the North, Owiny meets with LRA/M representatives led by James Obita in London.

- **6-Nov-1997**, LRM Foreign Affairs Secretary James Obita writes to President Museveni on the need to give peace a Chance.

- **In Nov-1997,** President Museveni replies to Obita acknowledging receipt of LRA/M's letter on their readiness to talk peace and request them to end their sustained "campaign to attack, maim and kill innocent civilians kidnapping, raping and defilement of young girls", which they did not fulfil.

- **12- Dec-1997,** the San't Egidio community hosts a meeting in Rome with a key LRM official an Uganda government's representatives who included State minister for Foreign Affairs Amama Mbabazi, and ESO chief David Pulkol.

- **January 1999**: Gulu LC V Chairman, Lt. Col. Ochora, wrote to Kony requesting for dialogue. Kony replied, agreeing in principle to the talks but subsequently reneged on this.

- **April 1999:** Government sent two Emissaries namely Nyeko Ibrahim Ocaya and Capt. Oketch Kuru who met LRA Commander Adyebo. The two emissaries were killed by LRA and the initiative collapsed.

- **13-May-1999**: President Museveni declared general amnesty for LRA. The bill declaring amnesty was made into law. Josephine Apire then LRA spokeswoman snubbed the amnesty on BBC on 27-May-1999. Amnesty was extended up Dec 2003, then March 2004.

- **May 1999:** President Yoweri Museveni personally wrote to Joseph Kony accepting the proposal of a peaceful solution to the conflict, as fronted by Washington-based Ugandan Mr. Jongomoi Okidi-Olal. Okidi-Olal made the proposal after meeting with Kony and his Commanders in Juba in April 1999 and subsequently with former US President Jimmy Carter in Atlanta. President Museveni also agreed that President Jimmy Carter should act as mediator and that the Government of Sudan must be involved in the peace process. This initiative collapsed after the Sudan Government failed to link the negotiating team with Kony in Southern Sudan. Kony also failed to live up to his earlier promise to release the 22 schoolgirls he had abducted from Aboke Secondary School in Northern Uganda.

- **Mid-February 2000**: Dr Joyce Neu, Head of the Carter Centre Conflict Resolution Programme, and colleague Craig Withers, meet Kony at Nisitu, South of Juba as part of Government of Uganda's efforts to use mediators to end the LRA rebellion in the Northern Uganda.

- **June 2001**: The LC V Chairman of Gulu district, Walter Ochora and two UPDF coordinators i.e Captain Oyet Weliki (a former LRA rebel) and Major Okot held 3 rounds of talks with LRA Commander Onen Kamdule in Awoonyim Village, Aswa County in Northern Uganda. Onen gave the following conditions:

  - UPDF should stop attacking LRA rebels.

  - Government should hand back to LRA all LRA rebels and abductees who either escaped or were rescued.

  - Government should give LRA rebels food, drugs and other necessities.

- That if integrated within the UPDF, LRA rebels must retain their current ranks and LRA must be treated equally like the UPDF.

- That in the event of deploying them, they must be deployed in Acholiland.

- That funds be availed to LRA to assist their families.

This initiative was also failed by the LRA.

- **August 2002-February 2003:** President Yoweri Museveni named a Government Team to negotiate with the LRA. The then First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Eriya Kategaya chaired the team. The members included UPDF Reserve Force Commander Lt. Gen. Salim Saleh, the then Minister for the Presidency, Hon. Gilbert Bukenya, the Attorney General, Francis Ayume, Minister of State for Higher Education, Hon. Betty Akech as well as Acholi MPs Hon. Okumu Reagan and Hon. Norbert Mao. In February 2003, President Museveni expanded the team to include MPs Bosco Okello Oryem representing Kitgum district and Santa Okot representing Pader district. However, the LRA failed to name their team and therefore the negotiating process could not proceed.

- **January-February 2003:** Under the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), Acholi Chief (Rwot) Oywakamoi held a meeting with LRA commanders, who indicated the following:

  - They wanted guarantee for their security during peace talks with government

  - They wanted the International Community to be involved in peace talks.

- They would name their peace team by 7-Mar-2003.

- International bodies should supply them with food.

- They would declare and observe a cease-fire, during which they would stop abducting people, stop ambushing vehicles and stop attacking villages.

- They would propose safe zones, preferably North of Gulu-Kitgum road and near water sources.

Though still continuing, the ARLPI has remained inconclusive due to LRA's conflicting signals towards peace negotiations.

- **6-Mar-2003**: A planned meeting between the LRA and the Presidential Peace Team and religious leaders flopped after LRA leader Kony issued orders to rebels to kill the negotiators.

- **June 2003**: LRA Field Commander Yardin Nyeko made a statement in Kitgum district, saying that LRA was no longer interested in peace talks. He also threatened civilians in Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps that they would be killed unless they left the camps.

- **February 2004**: The LRA attacked Barlonyo IDP camp and massacred about 200 civilians.

- **15 April 2004**: President Museveni released a Statement renewing Government readiness to talk with the LRA, either directly or through intermediaries, in order to expeditiously resolve the rebellion.

- **14-Nov-04**: Government declared a one-week Ceasefire in limited areas North of Patiko and Atanga and West of Palabek, East of Atiak up to Sudan border covering 300 sq miles as a gazetted area for the LRA to assemble into. The ceasefire, which ended on 23-Nov-04, was extended by another one-week up to 3-Dec-04. Later it was extended again up to 31st December 2004.

- **16-Nov-04:** Kony welcomed the Peace talks and suggested it takes place on 15-Dec-04 with the Cultural leaders, and Elders of Acholi and Lango and members of his family in Sudan. Kony also wanted 100 days for the ceasefire. Bigombe advised Kony that the date be brought forward and the venue be in Uganda.

- **17-Nov-04**: Betty Bigombe and three observers (whites) met Kolo of the LRA at Koch Amaa –15Kms west of Gulu where Bigombe delivered Government message including a map of the gazetted area. However, the LRA were using the gazetted area as safe corridor to Sudan and for reorganisation.

- **25-Nov-04**: (the day of the expiry of the ceasefire) Kony also ordered Kolo and Otti to go to Sudan and demanded for the withdrawal of the UPDF from Nisitu, Aruu, Palotaka and Pajok.

To date, Uganda government is still committed to hold peace talks with LRA leadership and the government Peace Committee headed by Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda; Minister for internal Affairs is still waiting for LRA's acceptance.

Rebel groups that have been integrated into UPDF through dialogue:

- UNRF I (1986)

- UPDM/A (1988)

- UPA (1994)
- UNRF II (24- Dec-2002)
- WNBF (October 2003).

4. OPERATIONS AGAINST LRA

a) From 1986 up to 2002, UPDF has carried out several operations against LRA in Soroti, Pader, Kitgum and Gulu districts which have tremendously reduced its capacity.

b) In 2002, the Government of Uganda signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sudan Government permitting UPDF to carry out operations against the LRA inside Sudan within a limited area (up to the Red Line). As a result, ***"Operation Iron Fist"*** was launched and it dismantled LRA camps below the Red Line. They shifted to Imatong Mountains where they continued to wreck havoc among the population. UPDF continued to pursue them and this resulted in the reduction of their strength from approximately 5,000 (3000 armed) to an estimated current strength of about 500 (300 armed) in DRC under Kony and Vincent Otti. The remnants in Uganda are scattered in the Acholi region.

While government has been militarily engaging LRA, she has also been using the humanitarian mechanisms to solve the problems caused by Kony. To achieve this, government has been working closely with local authorities and NGOs to ensure that peace returns to the affected areas and these measures have produced desired results.

5. END RESULTS OF THE MILITARY OPERATONS

Due to UPDF's continued military pressure against LRA, on the 13 Sept 05, about 80 LRA rebels under the LRA Vice Chairman Vincent Otti and another Commander Abudema, crossed R. Nile heading Westwards and entered Western Equatoria (Southern Sudan) in Yei general area. The group abducted an official of the Loka FSB de-mining Company looting items including 02 Satellite phones, 02 Walkie-talkies and 01 HF man park radio.

On 18th Sept 2005, the group attacked and killed innocent civilians and destroyed property in Loka area. The group carried out looting the following day 20 Sept 2005 at Gabur trading center, 5 km S. W of Loka. By 21 Sept 2005, the group had crossed into the DRC and was reported at Banga Village, 11 miles from Aba.

On 25th September, 2005 at Bola, 50 km from Nyato, a meeting took place between LRA representatives led by one Col. Tabu Matata, who represented Vincent Otti, with representatives of the MONUC, Maj. Gen Pulenda Padiri, the Commander of the 9th FARDC Division based in Kisangani, Mr.Teo Baluti, Governor of Oriental Province, Kisangani and other local Congolese administration officials.

These LRA elements are now in Garamba National Park in DRC killing and abducting people inside Sudan in the territory Northwest of Aba, between Yei and Maridi forcing people into IDPs and using DRC territory to destabilise Southern Sudan.

6. CURRENT STATUS

a) Definition of problem area

- LRA operates between Juba-Tumbura and Juba - Torit (Sudan).
- Acholi region (Uganda).
- Watsa-Mahagi (DRC).

b) Forces operating in the problem area:

- International: MONUC and UNMIS
- National: UPDF, SAF, SPLA and FARDC
- Renegades: LRA and Zande militia in Yambio (Southern Sudan)

c) CONSTRAINTS OF STAKE HOLDERS

i. Failure by the region to perceive the LRA as a regional threat.
ii. Slow pace in the implementation of the CPA in Sudan.
iii. Lack of technical capacity.
iv. MONUC and UNMIS mandate.
v. Natural barriers/terrain.
vi. Lack of cohesion within FARDC and SPLA.

7. WAY FORWARD

Uganda government wished to stress that LRA is not only a threat to Uganda but has now turned into a regional problem. This demands for a combined effort by regional stakeholders with the help of the international community if LRA rebels are to be disarmed and its indicted leaders arrested and handed over to the ICC.

The Government of Uganda would therefore propose the following:

i. There is need for the Sudan and DRC government to do all it takes to ensure that the LRA rebels are disarmed and the indicted leaders are arrested. Pressure should

also be brought to bear on all other parties and individuals assisting LRA to stop forthwith.

ii. There should be a Memorandum of Understanding between Uganda and DRC similar to the one Uganda has with Sudan in which UPDF would be allowed to enter DRC territory and hunt down LRA rebels. Such operations should be under the close supervision of international bodies like MONUC.

iii. The Sudan government, SPLA and UNMIS should as soon as possible get involved in the LRA problem before the problem goes out of hand.

iv. There need for the coordination of operations carried out against LRA by individual countries.

v. There should be a Regional/Tripartite mechanism involving DRC, Uganda, Sudan/SPLA, MONUC and UNMIS to constantly monitor LRA. Uganda has on her part already set up a committee to be part of this proposed action group.

This Tripartite mechanism could have the following feature;

vi. That MONUC and UNMIS be mandated to use all necessary means to disarm LRA rebels and arrest their indicted leaders.

vii. That the possibility of mandating a country or regional power with adequate capacity to deal with the question of LRA be explored as was the case of the French-led Artemis in DRC (2003) or the Australian-led force in East Timor (2003).

Annex II

Myth 1: people are in camps because they were forced by the army

It was the night of January 7, 1997. A large group of LRA rebels descended upon Lokung and Padibe sub-counties in Kitgum district. Angered over the fact that some Kitgum abductees had revealed the location of hidden arms cashes to the army, they embarked upon a five-days killing spree.

'They were killing people wherever they found them', recalled Nokrach Fidensio, camp leader of Padibe IDP camp. 'Some were slaughtered in their gardens as they went to collect dried sim-sim. Others were hacked to death in their compounds or burned alive inside their houses. In my own village, six people, including my aunt, were clubbed to death on 25 January.'

The massacre, in which over 400 people were killed, uprooted almost the entire population of Padibe East and West. 'Over 20,000 people fled to the trading centre, where there was a military detachment', said Fidensio. 'Others fled to Kitgum town and joined us later.' Asked if anybody was forced to go the camp, he replied: 'No, everybody here left their homes for fear of being killed.'

Almost everybody we interviewed in Kitgum, Gulu, Pader, Lira and Apac districts described how the LRA's extremes drove them into the camps for protection. Most pointed at specific atrocities that caused their displacement. The survivors of these atrocities and their horrific testimonies are living evidence of the terror that gripped northern Uganda.

In Mucwini, in Kitgum district, it was the massacre of 56 civilians at Kirome village on 24 July 2002 that sparked off the mass movement of people. One woman who survived, Esther Apat, had been forced to smash her six-month old son to death against a tree because he was crying, before she herself was hacked on the head and left for dead.

'People first came to the camp in July 2000, as the rebels were killing and abducting', explained Mucwini camp leader, Livingstone Kolo. 'When relative peace returned, they went back to their villages. But it was the Kirome massacre of July 2002 that caused the mass displacement. The entire population of nine parishes took refuge here.'

In Atiak, in Gulu district, people pointed at the massacre of 200 civilians in April 1995 as the cause of the first displacement in the area. According to one of the survivors, Catherine Akwero, the victims, including 45 students of Atiak Technical School, were lined up in front of deputy LRA commander, Vincent Otti, a born of the area, who was seated on a chair. 'You are useless people. Your guns are rusting', the terrified victims were told. Otti then personally gave the orders for the three rounds of shooting. Akwero had to watch her 14-year old son being riddled with bullets.

In Pabbo sub-county, Gulu district, it was the abduction and killing of thirteen adults from Bira village in February 1996 which caused the first movement of people to Pabbo trading centre. 'As the violence and killing continued between June and September 1996, people from other parishes joined us', explained camp leader Oryem Simon. Asked if anybody was ordered into the camp by the army, he reacted surprised. 'When your life is in danger, you just run. Nobody needs to force you', he said.

Mzee Benson Pajob at Amuru IDP camp in Gulu district knows why he is in the camp. 'The rebels attacked my village, Labongo, on 11 October 1997, taking away my 18 year old son and my brother', he recalled. 'They were later found lying at the side of the road, with ten others, all beaten to

death. After that incident, many people from Palyec, Pamuca and Pagak parishes fled to Amuru camp. They have never gone back.'

In Patongo, in Pader district, it was the Gere Gere massacre, where the rebels dismembered their victims and cooked them, that caused a stampede of tens of thousands of people to the trading centre, turning it into one of the biggest camps in Northern Uganda.

Patongo camp leader, Okello Celestino, was one of the first to flee. He left his home in August 2001, after he had been abducted, along with his three wives and all their children, and seriously tortured. 'We came to this trading centre for protection', he narrated. 'Patongo was not yet a camp. We just slept under people's verandas. When the Gere Gere massacre took place, the whole community joined us.'

Apac district was hit later that year. According to the camp leader of Otwal in Apac district, a series of simultaneous killings at Kodi, Wi-Agaba and Te-Angola villages in December 2002, in which 23 people were clubbed, shot and burned to death, made the entire region flee. 'People fled in fear of their lives', said camp leader, Ogwal Willy. 'They will only go back home when the last rebels have been eliminated.'

Lira was next. The massacres at Ngetta in November 2003, where 14 people were slaughtered, and Abiya and Barlonyo in February 2004, in which resp. 80 and 300 people perished, routed the entire population of the district. Over 300,000 people fled to trading centres, sub-county headquarters and Lira municipality. Thousands of people filled up the pavements and verandas in Lira town every night, seeking army protection. They were later moved into rural camps, closer to their fields.

Then, on 15th June 2003, Teso was struck, taking everybody by surprise. The first massacre at Obalanga and the mass abductions that followed, drove shock waves through the Teso community, prompting people to

abandon their homesteads and run for their lives. Like in Lira, the pavements and verandas in Soroti town filled up with thousands of displaced people. And like in Lira, most people were later moved into rural camps, closer to their homes.

Only twice during our journey was there mentioning of people being urged by the army to move to camps. However, in each of these occasions, the order came after consultation with the local leaders; and the traditional leaders or the local councillors were involved in the mobilisation.

Ottika Terence Kanyum, the camp leader of Lapul in Pader district, recalled a security meeting in September 2002 by the district officials and the army. 'There were killings and abductions all over the place', he said. 'The insurgency became too much for people to stay at home. In a security meeting, it was resolved that the population would be called to the camp in order to protect them better. People were given two weeks to move. The local councillors were involved in the mobilisation. Nobody resisted.'

But Akello Jemina did not wait for the order. 'I came to the camp in August 2002 because of rebel atrocities in my village', the 37 year old woman in Lapul camp said. 'Life had become unbearable. There were daily abductions. We would sleep in the bush every night for fear of attacks.'

In Atiak, too, the remaining villagers were called into the camp. 'In 1996, the rebels were seriously recruiting', remembered LC3 Chairman Odong William George. 'Being so close to the Sudan border, we were always the first to be hit. Abductions were so rampant that our children were living in the bush day and night. Food was brought to them where they were hiding. As the situation became untenable, the local leaders and the army agreed on a plan to assemble the remaining population in order to protect them. The *rwot kwere* (traditional leaders) were doing the mobilisation. The army only speeded up that process by issuing the order.'

Annex III

Myth 2: two million people have been living in camps for 20 years

Orungo trading centre in Amuria district was once one of the biggest internally displaced people's camps in one of the most affected parts of Teso region. Over 26,000 people sought refuge here when the Lord's Resistance Army struck Teso in June 2003. Today, most huts in the camp are abandoned. The grass thatched roofs and parts of the walls have been eaten by nature.

Only about 6000 people remain in the camp. Asked why they have not yet joined their clan mates at home, the remainders give various reasons. Student Oduch Samson of S3 at Orungo High School says he stayed behind with his brother to be closer to school. His village, Akeriau, is seven kilometres away. For teenagers like Samson, the hut in the camp does not only provide free accommodation, it also lets them escape from parental supervision.

Aguti Hellen, mother of one, says she is still in the camp because there is no food at home. They have just planted and crops are not yet ready for harvesting. In the camp, she could offer her labour to cultivate other people's land and buy food with the earnings. And her house is not ready, she adds. The grass for the thatched roof has not yet matured.

According to camp leader, Erau Michael, some people keep two houses: one in the village and one in the camp, just in case. Kony might be in Congo but he is still alive and free. Tubur rock, where the rebels used to perform their rituals, is a constant reminder of Kony's alleged magical power. But it is mainly the Karamajong rustlers disturbing them these days. Two weeks ago, they stole 28 cattle in the area. All were later recovered.

Orungo is illustrative for the whole region. Of the estimated 483,000 Teso people displaced at the peak of the LRA insurgency, 300,000 have gone back home. Those remaining keep one leg in the camp, mainly out of fear attacks for Karamajong attacks. 'Karamajong is the biggest threat now', confirms Sam Oinya, the District Disaster Preparedness Coordinator of Soroti. 'In Kaberamaido, 98% of people have returned to their villages. In Katakwi, which is bordering Karamoja, only 20% have gone home.'

A similar pattern can be observed in neighbouring Lango. While all displaced people in the southern part of Lira district had voluntarily returned home by August 2005, others keep commuting between the camp and the village. A UN assessment in Lira district in March 2006 found that over 55 percent of the displaced in the camps visited had partially or permanently returned to their villages.

The services offered in the camp, such as health care, education and food distribution, and the assistance promised to those who return home, are some of the reasons why people are holding on. But the hut in the camp is mainly kept as a potential refuge in case the security situation deteriorates. Any LRA attack or Karamajong raid, even miles away, can make people run back to the camp. 'Our problem is now mainly cattle raids', says Oryem Salim, camp leader of Aloi, one of the biggest camps in Lira. 'The Karamajong came up to here last February and stole cattle from Alebtong.'

The constant movement of people, from urban centres to rural camps, and from rural camps to the village, makes it almost impossible to establish the number of internally displaced people in northern Uganda at any given time. However, recent claims that nearly 2 million people are still displaced by the LRA war, and the general belief that northern Ugandans have been living in camps for 20 years, are not correct.

In fact, the first camps were established in September-October 1996 in Gulu as a result of intense LRA activity in places like Atiak, Anaka, Koch-Goma, Opit and Pabbo. In Kitgum, it were the massacres in Lokung and Padibe in January 2007 that drove the first people from their homes to the trading centres and to Kitgum town. According to a USAID assessment by Robert Gersony, a total of 140,000 people were displaced by April 1997. A Unicef Humanitarian Situation Report of August 2005, quoted by the International Crisis Group, confirms that the number of displaced people in early 2002 stood at 150,000.

The main displacement took place after June 2002, when the LRA camps in Sudan were dismantled, prompting the LRA to reinvade Uganda. When the rebels struck Lango and Teso regions in mid-2003, the displaced population might have briefly peaked 2 million. But hundreds of thousands started returning to their villages at the beginning of 2005. By mid-2005, the official figure of displaced people, as used by both the Government of Uganda and World Food Programme, was 1.4 million. Many in Lango and Teso regions continue to go home. And many of those remaining are fearing as much the LRA as the Karamajong.

In Acholiland, where the LRA threat is still the most pervasive, decongestion is the answer for the time being, in a move to take people closer to their fields. Biria, one of the decongested camps we visited in Gulu district, is still being constructed. It is supposed to decongest almost 10,000 people from Pabbo camp. The walls are already up, but the roofs are missing. 'We are only waiting for the grass to grow', says acting camp commandant, Oryem Simon.

Most publications put the figure of displaced people in Acholiland at 1.2 million to 1.3 million, constituting 90 percent of the total population. Yet, according to the 2005 census, the population of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts combined is only 1.1 million.

Interestingly, a study of the Prime Minister's Office in the three districts of Acholiland found that, when the war ends, not **all displaced people** will go home. 'If peace comes to northern Uganda, as many as one third of the IDP population may start moving out of the camps spontaneously. Another third will move if some assistance is given, while a final third will remain in the camps, at least for a while', the *Northern Uganda Internally Displaced Persons Profiling Study* of September 2006 concludes.

For adolescents like Oduch Samson, the semi-urban lifestyle of the camp, the vicinity of school and the newly won freedom might be more attractive than life back in the village.